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Reciprocal Literacy Sponsorship in Service-Learning Settings

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Abstract

Much of the research on literacy sponsorship positions students as "sponsored" rather than "sponsor," which promotes a view of sponsorship as a one-way, fixed endeavor. In this essay, I consider how, in the context of service-learning, students might sponsor literacy and how this literacy sponsorship has the potential to be reciprocal. I highlight a semester-long course project that aimed to develop a variety of literacies in students. Results show that students supported, enabled, and sponsored the literacies of the clients with whom they worked. Findings also reveal that this literacy sponsorship was reciprocated by the clients, which indicates that, at least in service-learning settings, literacy sponsorship functions as a dynamic, reciprocal process where both parties learn and grow through their relationship with each other. This research is significant because it brings students into the discussion on literacy sponsorship and shows how individuals can seize the literacy resources offered to meet their own goals, motivations, and needs.

Keywords: literacy sponsor, service-learning, multiliteracies, composition pedagogy, social change, client

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Introduction

> Usually richer, more knowledgeable, and more entrenched than the sponsored, sponsors nevertheless enter a reciprocal relationship with those they underwrite. They lend their resources or credibility to the sponsored but also stand to gain benefits from their success, whether by direct repayment or, indirectly, by credit of association. (Brandt, "Sponsors" 167)

> [A]s more and more people participate in online writing spaces, we might assume there will be

> more and more opportunities for people to become literacy sponsors. (Hunter 20)

The concept of a literacy sponsor has had a significant impact on theory and practice in composition and literacy studies. By demonstrating that individual literacy achievement is affected by and tied to a variety of "people, institutions, materials, and motivations" (Brandt, "Sponsors" 167), this concept has revolutionized our conceptions of literacy and the way we teach writing. Deborah Brandt defines literacy sponsors as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" ("Sponsors" 166). Brandt's work helps scholars recognize the variety of internal and external forces that structure opportunities and shape literacy acquisition, development, and practices. Moreover, by connecting "literacy as an individual development to literacy as an economic development," Brandt's research teaches us that sponsors "set the terms for access to literacy and wield powerful incentives for compliance and loyalty" (166–67).

Since Brandt's groundbreaking work, literacy scholars have examined the myriad institutions and entities that sponsor literacy. Some of these sponsors include academies and schools (Carrick; Finders; Pitcock), government agencies (Lebduska; Pedersen), corporations (Debs), religious and missionary groups (Engelson; Moulder; Pavia), online forums (Pavia; Scenters-Zapico), comics (Fehler; Jacobs), and individuals (Daniell and Mortensen; Webb-Sunderhaus). Scholars have also observed how sponsored subjects respond to the sponsorship: with acceptance, compliance, circumvention, subversion, reassignment, disruption, and diversion (see Brandt, "Sponsors"; Daniell and Mortensen; Pedersen). In practice, those sponsored might protest (Moulder), write (Moulder; Pitcock; Yi and Hirvela), forge new identities (Hogg), or build relationships (Carrick). In many cases, the sponsored even reappropriate the literacy resources offered by the sponsor to fulfill personal, social, and professional goals, thus empowering the sponsored agency to initiate change (Carrick; Daniell and Mortensen).

While this scholarship situates literacy sponsorship as a complex subject in which the sponsored seize literacy resources to achieve power and agency, this work, perhaps implicitly, forwards a view of literacy sponsorship as a one-way, top-down endeavor where the "sponsored" and "sponsor" retain fairly fixed roles: sponsor is always sponsor, and sponsored is always sponsored. Even when the sponsored claim agency and appropriate the literacy resources offered within the confines of the sponsorship, the sponsored is rarely presented as moving from *sponsored* to *sponsor* or as being able to reciprocate the sponsorship. Brandt argues that literacy sponsors "enter a reciprocal relationship with those they underwrite" ("Sponsors" 167), yet our conversations have not yet accounted for a notion of reciprocal literacy sponsorship where the roles of sponsor and sponsored are fluid, interchangeable, or nuanced.

One way to examine reciprocal literacy sponsorship is to explore sponsorship on a smaller scale, as it is practiced in the lives of individuals. At the core of Brandt's notion of literacy sponsorship is its connection to large-scale systems, conditions, and structures (i.e., economic, historical, political).But Brandt does not limit her definition of sponsorship to these forces. Instead, she emphasizes the roles individuals play in connection to these forces, including how literacy access and opportunities for literacy learning emerge ("Sponsors" 169).Moreover, her analysis of individual lives underscores how individuals such as parents, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, and supervisors do sponsor literacies. Of course, Brandt emphasizes how the motivations of these individual sponsors are always connected to a broader context, but her analysis does not preclude the idea that individuals can sponsor literacy.

If individuals, then, can function as literacy sponsors, what does literacy sponsorship look like when the role of literacy sponsor is fluid—when an individual functions both as *sponsor* and *sponsored*—when the sponsorship is reciprocal? One avenue for investigating this question of reciprocal literacy sponsorship emanates within service-learning contexts. In such settings, individuals with very different motivations and skill sets (students and clients/community partners) work together to perform tasks and accomplish goals (see Adler-Kassner, et al.; Deans). In composition courses, these projects often involve writing and communication. Students in service-learning settings are often seen as facilitators of social change who collaborate with others to rhetorically, materially, and socially facilitate change (see Coogan; Cushman, "Rhetorician").In such a context, then, students might be enabled to become literacy sponsors. As of yet, however, theorists have not sufficiently explored the ways in which students might be or might become literacy sponsors, particularly in service-learning settings that involve interactions with others.

Most of the research on student sponsorship examines student "self-sponsorship" (see Hesse; Ruecker; Yi and

Hirvela; Scenters-Zapico) or it amplifies the sponsorship of students by others (teachers, schools, parents, institutions, video games, etc.). Very little research has examined how students might use their literacy knowledge, skills, and experiences to shape and sponsor the literacies of others, which constitutes a significant theoretical and pedagogical gap. Neglecting to account for the ways in which literacy sponsorship might be reciprocal and how students participate in sponsorship indicates that we do not yet fully recognize the dynamic way literacy sponsorship can work or value the active role students might play in the process.

In this essay, I consider how, in the context of service-learning, students might sponsor literacy and how this sponsorship might be reciprocal. In particular, I examine the ways in which students participate in literacy sponsorship with community clients and how, conversely, students are sponsored in the process, thus emphasizing the reciprocal nature of sponsorship and showing how the roles of sponsor and sponsored are fluid, interdependent, and shifting. To examine this concept of reciprocal literacy sponsorship, I apply a multiliteracies lens to my discussion of a semester-long course project I designed to develop a variety of literacies in students. This approach allows me to articulate the literacies students developed and sponsored through their interactions with clients. Learning these important literacies opened the door for students to share them with clients and thus sponsor literacy and for clients to sponsor certain literacies in students, thus establishing a dynamic, give-and-take relationship where both parties benefited through their relationship with each other. By engaging in multiple and varied writing experiences for public audiences with real motives and purposes, students and clients moved between sponsor and sponsored, passing along important literacies and skills and receiving them as well. I ultimately argue that projects that encourage students to move between sponsored and sponsor not only reinforce students' personal literacy skills but also bring confidence and empowerment to them as they become shareholders in the outcomes of their local, distant, and digital communities. This agency gives students the confidence to act for themselves in a given situation and to resist, disrupt, or intervene in certain discourses and discourse communities (Reynolds). This research is significant because it expands our understandings of literacy sponsorship as fluid and also brings students into the discussion on literacy sponsorship. When students feel confident in transferring literacies to others and when they are open to accepting literacy sponsorship from those they sponsor, they can become empowered agents of change that work strategically to sponsor literacies and to understand the larger systems at work in individual literacy development.

In what follows, I first explain the theoretical framework I applied to examine reciprocal literacy sponsorship. I then outline the pedagogical framework of the study by describing the service-learning project students completed and in which sponsorship occurred. Next, I highlight the results of the study by examining five multiliteracies students developed, sponsored, and were sponsored in: rhetorical, technological, social, ethical, and critical. I end with a discussion of reciprocal literacy sponsorship and the dynamic ways in which literacy sponsorship can be deployed and shared.

Theoretical Framework: The Multiliteracies Model

In 1996, a group of international scholars of language and literacy called the New London Group (NLG) published "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," a revolutionary essay that argued for changes in literacy pedagogy as a response to rapidly evolving communication technologies and the increased prominence of cultural and linguistic diversity. Instead of solely focusing on language as the primary meaning-making mode, the NLG advocated for a pedagogy of "multiliteracies," an approach that broadens existing conceptions of literacy to encompass the many different ways meaning is constructed, expressed, and represented in this digital age. A pedagogy based on multiliteracies is multimodal: it emphasizes a variety of semiotic modes that can represent meaning, including the visual, spatial, tactile, gestural, auditory, and linguistic (Cope and Kalantzis; Kress).Although these modes differ by "culture and context, and have specific cognitive, culture, and social effects" (Cope and Kalantzis 5), they are used to make meaning, and, therefore, our classrooms must teach and reinforce this range of new literacies and skills. When our classrooms emphasize the great variety of semiotic resources available, students will have "the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their aspirations" (Cope and Kalantzis 5).

The pedagogical implications of a multiliteracies framework are vast. For one, composition studies now has a commitment to foster multiliteracies in students. Scholars now recognize the need to integrate multiple modes into classrooms. Students today compose texts in multiple modalities, including audio, video, and visual. Scholars continue to address practical ways to implement multiliteracies pedagogies into writing classrooms

(Alexander; Bowen and Whithaus; Selber; Selfe, *Multimodal*; Sorapure).Today, meaning is made not just through words but through many different modes as well. Literacies are seen as multiple, and students now develop a range of multiliteracies. Second, a multiliteracies theory regards any meaning-making activity as a matter of *Design*. In the NLG's conception, Design is the central metaphor for what students need to learn about literacy. Learners integrate a variety of representational resources to make meaning, constantly remaking and using them as they work to achieve their purposes (Cope and Kalantzis 5). Finally, because literacy is focused on Design rather than grammar, a multiliteracies pedagogy is transformative and agentive: it "recognizes that meaning making is an active, transformative process" (Cope, Kalantzis, and Cloonan 72). Students are no longer passive recipients of knowledge or "agents of reproduction"; rather, they "are fully makers and remakers of signs and transformers of meaning"; they are "active designer[s] of meaning, with a sensibility open to differences, change, and innovation" (Cope, Kalantzis, and Cloonan 70, 72). The agency offered to students through a pedagogy of multiliteracies invites them to make and remake the world they live in. Agency here "is not simply about finding one's own voice but also about intervening in discourses of the everyday and cultivating rhetorical tactics that make interruption and resistance an important part of any conversation" (Reynolds 59).

One way I have found to develop an array of literacies in students and to offer them greater agency is by integrating service-learning projects into my classrooms. Service-learning has long been conceived as an avenue to develop important literacies and skills (Alexander and Powell; Ball and Goodburn; Mastrangelo and Tischio). And, because of its connection to "real-world" situations, it induces different motivations for literacy development. Students come to see their work as having import and effect and often have a greater desire to learn literacies that will aid their work with their client/community partner (see Adler-Kassner, et al.; Cushman, "Rhetorician"; Deans).In addition to the service-learning component, assignments that are multimodal invite students to hone their literacies and skills in a variety of mediums and modes and to show them how this knowledge and understanding will be relevant to their professional, personal, and civic lives (see Selber; Selfe, *Multimodal*). In short, a multiliteracies frame provides greater insight into the ways in which reciprocal literacy sponsorship functioned in a service-learning setting.

Pedagogical Framework: Professional Digital Marketing Project

In response to calls in composition and literacy studies to develop multiliteracies in students, I designed the Professional Digital Marketing Project (PDMP). This project was the major semester project in an upper-level special topics course called "Writing in a Digital Age." In this course, I wanted students to develop a repertoire of complex literacies and skills that would enable them to be successful in today's workplace. With the goal of exposing students to a range of literacies (e.g., rhetorical, technological, social, ethical, and critical), the PDMP asked students to create a "professional digital identity" (PDI) for themselves and a local small business by marketing each online. For the first six weeks of the semester (Part I), students focused on establishing a PDI for themselves. They created and managed a professional website, a blog, and social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. For the last ten weeks (Part II), and working either individually or in teams, students did the same for a local small business that had minimal to no online presence. The project itself was an integrated assignment where students could (ideally) develop multiliteracies by completing all of the required tasks (see Appendix for assignment sheet).[1]

Participants

Twenty undergraduate Professional Writing majors at a mid-size private institution in the South participated in this study. Eighteen students identified as female and two as male. Six students worked individually on the project, and fourteen worked on a team. The students partnered with eleven local small businesses. In all cases, the contact at the business site was the business owner. Table 1 provides more detail about each client.

Table 1. Description of Clients

Business Name	Industry	Gender (Age)	# of Students
Altus Design	interior design firm	Female (55-59)	1
Coffee Cabaret	coffeehouse and cafe	Male (45-49)	3

Customized Cuts	hair salon	Female (55-59)	1
Dazzled Photography	photography studio	Female (50-54)	1
Égalité	retail clothing shop	Female (40-45)	1
Horizons Daycare	daycare	Female (60-65)	1
Vanilla Bakery	bakery	Female (50-55)	3
Jane's Cookies	at-home cookie business	Female (60-65)	2
Links to Learning	educational consulting firm	Female (50-55)	3
Real Food	lunch cafe	Female (40-44) Male (40-44)	3
Solid Threads	t-shirt printing business	Male (25-29)	1

Assignment Structure

Students first became familiar with the business through a series of tasks that involved students learning about the business and the audience(s) it serves. Students researched the business, interviewed employees, and performed a rhetorical needs assessment in which they analyzed the business's history, mission, goals, and needs. Students then worked for ten weeks with the client to develop a cohesive professional digital identity. Toward the end of the semester, students were asked to transition these online sites to their clients so that the clients could continue to digitally market their businesses after the students had completed the semester. This requirement meant that students had to teach their clients how to use and manage a range of technologies, tools, and literacy practices. Students met with their clients consistently throughout the ten weeks—both in and out of class. The clients came to class at least three times, and some of them came to class up to eight times. During these class meetings, the clients met individually with the student(s) working with them, and they also participated orally and gave feedback during class discussions and presentations. I encouraged students to approach the project and their client as a humble learner and to work "in solidarity with" the business rather than be the knowledge-holder or benefactor (Green 293). This approach helped instill a collaborative relationship between students and clients and perhaps led to an openness for reciprocal literacy sponsorship to occur. Through written reflections, weekly progress reports, and class discussions, students considered what they were doing and learning. These moments provided students an opportunity to openly discuss and raise questions about their responsibilities, the project, and the business and also to reflect on the literacies they were developing and sharing. Students gave final oral presentations over the process, the final products developed, and the PDIs they created. The clients attended and participated in these presentations. Students were evaluated on the sites they created, how many followers they gained, their writing, their attention to the rhetorical situation, and how well they established a cohesive PDI across multiple media.

Data Collection and Analysis

A variety of data were collected from students, including written reflections, two oral presentations, and written products (websites, blogs, and social media sites). I also collected anecdotal data from the clients, namely oral participation during class discussions and student presentations and observation during class meetings in which they were present.[2] I analyzed these materials through the lens of the various multiliteracies individuals learn, a process that enabled me to precisely name the literacies that students developed and sponsored. In my analysis, I examine five multiliteracies: rhetorical, technological, social, ethical, and critical. I situate each literacy within scholarship from literacy studies that defines and explains each one and that also claims that students majoring in writing fields should possess.

Literacy Development and Sponsorship

Results show that this service-learning project gave students the opportunity to support, enable, and sponsor the literacies of others, both during the project as they collaborated with their clients and towards the end when they

transferred the digital sites to their clients. Findings also demonstrate that this literacy sponsorship was not only a one-way, top-down endeavor from student to client; rather, as students were sponsoring literacies of their clients, the clients were also sponsoring literacies of students, thus emphasizing how—at least in service-learning settings where the sponsor-sponsored relationship involves individuals—literacy sponsorship has the potential to be reciprocal. These findings are important because they underscore how sponsorship is more fluid, malleable, and dynamic than the fixed terms of "sponsor" and "sponsored" might suggest. They are also valuable in demonstrating that service-learning courses are ripe sites for reciprocal literacy sponsorship to occur: by providing an important avenue to build relationships that can enable the reciprocity and exchange of literacy sponsorship, service-learning courses invite students and clients to seize literacy resources to meet their own goals, motivations, and needs.

In what follows, I consider five multiliteracies: rhetorical, technological, social, ethical, and critical. In some literacies, students were the primary sponsors, while in other literacies the clients were.

Rhetorical Literacy

Through this service-learning assignment, students developed rhetorical literacies and sponsored their clients' rhetorical literacies as well. Rhetorical literacy has long been an esteemed outcome in our field. Stuart Selber argues that rhetorical literacy is made up of four parameters—persuasion, deliberation, reflection, and social action—that "delimit the terrain of rhetorical literacy and suggest the qualities of a rhetorically literate student" ("Rhetorical" 136). Kelli Cargile Cook views rhetorical literacy as "a multifaceted knowledge that allows writers to conceptualize and shape documents whatever their specific purpose or audience"; it "strives to develop in students a set of fluid skills and reflective practices that might be employed successfully given any audience, purpose, or writing situation" (10). Rhetorical literacy thus entails understanding how to use language to persuade, and, on a practical level, how to create documents that align to the audience, purpose, context, and genre. As Nora Bacon points out, service-learning contexts are prime for developing rhetorical literacy because of the varied audiences and purposes available (606).

In order to successfully establish a PDI, students had to understand the audience, purpose, and context for each online site, for this rhetorical knowledge helped shape the content, design, and style. To understand the rhetorical situation, students conducted a rhetorical needs assessment and profile of the small business in which they learned about the business's audience(s) (i.e., clients, constituents, donors, parents, board members) and then composed material that would meet these audiences' needs and expectations. Students learned how to emphasize appropriate details, use appropriate tones, and remain focused on their overall goals and purposes as they composed. Ultimately, this knowledge led to students developing their rhetorical aptitude.

As students were developing rhetorical literacy, it became evident that they were also conveying their skills and knowledge to their clients. In one class discussion at the beginning of the project, several students mentioned that their clients were somewhat frustrated that the students didn't "just get started writing" but instead spent at least two weeks gathering information, conducting interviews, and compiling the rhetorical needs assessment. When the students explained to their clients the reasons they were taking their time at the beginning to learn about the business and to gather information, the clients understood and became more supportive of the time spent on the front end. Moreover, after the rhetorical needs assessment and the profile presentation were completed, some students remarked that their clients were having trouble understanding rhetorical concepts of audience and purpose. Marlee, for example, was working with her client to write content for the website. The client insisted Marlee draft long paragraphs of content about her business—its history, the story of how she came to start the business, and some other peripheral details. Not only was the content not web-friendly, but the client wanted to place this information on her home page because she thought the story would entice customers to buy her products. In working with her client to edit the text, Marlee emphasized the importance of thinking of the audience's needs and the purpose of the site. She reflects,

> At times it was difficult to balance my growing understanding of tailoring something to an audience with what my client wanted. Jan felt it important for her customers to understand the beginnings of the business, and she wanted this information on her home page. While I thought the story about how her business came to be was inspiring, I didn't think the material belonged on the home page. I also didn't think the writing was focused on what the customer might want to know about the

> business. This was a minor point of conflict between my client and me, but she ultimately understood about the importance of tailoring to an audience and honing in on a purpose. I think what also convinced her was when I shared with her the concept of "reader-based prose"… [T]hen she seemed to understand why I was pushing for certain elements. . . . She expressed to me later that she had never thought about [these concepts] before but that she was already a better writer now that she took these things into consideration.

Marlee's developing understanding of the rhetorical situation allowed her to share her knowledge with her client and sponsor the client's rhetorical literacy.

In another example, Lauren, who worked with a local daycare, acquired rhetorical literacy and also sponsored the rhetorical literacy of her client. She writes,

> When I was working on the website for Horizons Daycare, I first took a playful approach in my writing because the client really thought this would be the best approach […] and she wanted the website to have a "fun" feel to it. I therefore chose to design the website using an Alice in Wonderland theme where the words and language were dramatic, enthusiastic, and witty. However, after seeing revision suggestions from you and my classmates, and really considering what this design was communicating to the audience, I decided that this stylistic approach was not the best choice. I realized that a website with a professional tone would be more appropriate because we were ultimately writing to parents, not kids. […] I met with the client and gave her the reasons why I didn't think this one worked. She agreed, and together we changed the theme to be more educational and professional. After this experience, I now scrutinize my writing style and my choices much more than before. I know that the client considers them as well because she expressed to me during multiple meetings that she didn't realize how complicated writing can be.

These scenes of literacy sponsorship involve students "enable[ing], support[ing], teach[ing], [and] model[ing]" rhetorical literacy for clients (Brandt, "Sponsors" 166).While students were becoming more aware of how to tailor their writing to their intended audience and purpose, they also explained and instilled this rhetorical knowledge in their clients, which gave clients new understandings of how better to fulfill their own goals and agendas as business owners. Though I cannot know for sure the extent to which clients developed rhetorical literacy, I do know that through exposure to the ideas of audience, purpose, genre, context, and media, the clients now have a greater awareness of the ways a writer's choices can shape and impact an audience. In short, by developing a complex and nuanced understanding of the rhetorical situation, both students and clients are better able to shape their communications to address varied audiences and purposes. This interplay between analytical skills and rhetorical analysis enhanced students' understanding of how these factors shape and influence discourse and therefore impressed upon the clients as well. Rhetorical literacy thus emphasizes flexible skills that are applicable to a wide range of situations. Now, clients can be better equipped to engage in what Brandt terms the "real" economy of writing, which is "socially useful to them and others, on its own terms" ("Afterword" 775).

Technological Literacy

In addition to developing and sponsoring rhetorical literacies, students also acquired technological literacies that enabled them to meet and fulfill their individual, social, and collaborative goals and compounded into literacy sponsorship of clients. Technological literacy includes technical proficiency with software programs, computer applications, and online media (Gurak; Selfe, *Technology*; Selfe and Hilligoss) as well as the "ability to critique this research and act upon it to make decisions and produce documents designed with and for users" (Cook 13). This latter conception is what Cynthia Selfe terms "critical technological literacy," which involves learning how to analyze and evaluate technology, its uses, and the diverse contexts surrounding it (*Technology*; see also Breuch; Coley; Selber).

During the assignment, students in this course developed both conceptions of technological literacy—technical proficiency and critical technological literacy. Throughout the semester, students became more adept at using technology to build a cohesive PDI. In a sense, then, the course, the assignment, and the larger contexts of writing studies and service-learning were sponsors of these students' literacies. But this literacy development did

not stop there: they also shared this technical knowledge with their clients. Towards the end of the project, when students were asked to hand off the digital sites to clients, students taught their clients how to perform simple technological tasks, including opening a browser, logging on to websites, sending emails, and downloading content. Students also demonstrated to clients how to use the specific platforms they had created for the business, including how to tweet, link, blog, and post. Michelle showed her client how to schedule posts on Facebook and Twitter. Zoe and her client had a long conversation about hashtags and together researched how businesses can harness hashtags to generate followers. Zoe then established a bank of hashtags that she passed along to the client. Students also discussed with their clients how each online composing medium (i.e., website, Facebook, Twitter, blog) has different conventions and purposes and that one should only post certain kinds of content to certain sites. Lola even commented: "My teammates and I tried to pass along our understandings of how to learn a technology so that our client could not only know how to use the various technologies but to use them successfully to meet her business goals." Clients learned from students how to decide what medium fits the task, context, audience, and purpose and to place that information there. Students thus enabled technological literacy development in the business owners: they were the delivery system for the economies of literacy development. Clients, however, took advantage of this opportunity and became equipped with many of the technical skills needed to meet the demands required for businesses to be successful in the twenty-first century.

Although students shared the first conception of technological literacy with clients (technical proficiency), they were less apt to impart the second, more complex definition of technological literacy to their clients (i.e., the ability to be more critical of technology and to act on it to achieve their own goals). The assignment required that students choose a client with little to no online presence, which led many students to assume that their client did not possess a great deal of technological literacy. As a result, they did not involve the clients in the process of rhetorical decision making or in creating the digital sites, thus withholding literacy sponsorship in this area. When students were ready to move forward with constructing the website and social media pages, they did so by themselves on their own computers. When evaluating what website builder to use, for instance, students went through the process of analyzing and critiquing each one but did so without input from their client, except in some instances to discuss how much money the client was willing to spend. Isabel's reflection shows her complex learning process when making these decisions:

> I analyzed several website builders before choosing one to use. My previous website-building experience had been with Wordpress.com, which was free, was easy to set up, and did not require users to know code. However, I used Wordpress.org for this project, which required a bit more knowledge about programming, using plug-ins, and finding a web host, but it offered so much more to me in terms of designing a successful website. Users were also responsible for updating the software, maintaining back-ups for the site, and stopping spam on the site. It required more technical knowledge than a free Wordpress.com site. The way I learned to navigate and use Wordpress.org was mainly through experimentation and the resource pages on WordPress.org. I found that the best way I learned and remembered how to do certain functions on new software was simply through experimentation. Once I tried a certain function, if it was successful, I knew how to do it next time I needed it. If it was not successful, I kept trying or consulted resources until I found my answer.

Through research and experimentation, Selena came to recognize the potentials and limitations afforded through various site builders and then chose one that would best fit her goals, thus expanding her critical technological literacies. However, because she completed this work and made these decisions largely on her own, the client did not benefit from her developing understanding of such things as usability, readability, and functionality in technological contexts.

In addition to this failure to share knowledge about critical technological literacy, another problem was that students were often the only ones with access to the passwords, URLs, and content before the material went live. Even when the sites were finally posted, the majority of the clients chose to leave the creating and posting of material to the students. This approach remained consistent until the end of the semester, when the student had to share technical knowledge with the client. At this point, however, the literacy sponsorship focused more on disseminating how-to technical knowledge rather than augmenting critical technological literacies. This latter ability would have allowed clients to become more adept at harnessing affordances, conventions, and online media for their own ends. Ultimately, as the students propelled forward in their critical technological skills, the

clients lagged behind, largely because the digital production was completed by students separately from their clients.

In sum, by engaging critically with multiple kinds of technologies, students developed technical proficiency in a range of modes, media, and technologies. Students also viewed it as extremely important to sponsor technological literacies in their clients, for without these skills, the digital marketing and economic gain could not occur. However, because the clients were not involved in more sustainable technological literacy instruction, their ability to continue managing these sites after the students left is questionable. Although the students' actions on the web ultimately increased sales and revenues, conveyed positive PDIs, and opened the door for greater exposure for the businesses, because they completed the technical tasks and online marketing on their own, this technological literacy sponsorship was not as successful as it could have been.

Social Literacy

Although students were the primary literacy sponsors for rhetorical and technological literacy, clients were the main literacy sponsors of social literacy. Social literacy entails having "social skills," or the ability to collaborate and work well with others (Cook; Wolfe). Social literacy also entails recognizing that all discourse arises out of a social situation and that writing is socially situated (Cook; LeFevre). Acquiring social literacy empowered students to become more adept collaborators, communicators, and writers, and it allowed them to be successful in their collaborations with their clients and to be receptive to literacy sponsorship.

Clients taught students important social skills, including compromise, flexibility, and the ability to handle conflict in productive ways. Students had to learn to listen, empathize with, and understand someone else's point of view. They had to adjust their own schedules to meet the needs of busy clients, placing the clients' demands above their own and sympathizing with the plight of the small business. Kathy writes about how she learned and grew in her conflict management skills by observing her client:

> I sat in on a few staff meetings my client had with her employees. The environment got really tense in a few of them, and I didn't know how to respond. However, Theresa [the client] would say something funny or make an unexpected comment that would help everyone relax. She would lead the group in talking through the differences of opinions, and the atmosphere got less tense. I was amazed at Theresa's ability to communicate with such a different group of people and to make everyone feel valued while still clearly communicating what she needed to say. I learned a lot about conflict management and the importance of listening and observing from watching her at work.

Likewise, Jason noted, how the client instilled in him social literacy:

> My client taught me how to consider the opinions of others and work hard to create a good atmosphere where everyone can succeed. She also taught me to be more understanding of other people's situations, especially since she was so slow to respond to my emails and texts. This experience was difficult at times, but I learned a lot about the importance of consistent communication and how to handle my emotions.

These students came to recognize that social literacy involves cooperation and flexibility, and they received these messages largely through the sponsorship of their client, each of whom had something to gain in their developing understanding of social literacy, including increased profit, a good collaborative relationship with the student, and a strong business reputation.

Students also developed social literacy when they became more confident in vocalizing their concerns to their clients. In one instance, a client with an interior design firm asked the student working with her to develop a second website for a different business she ran. The student approached me with concerns over having enough time to complete this request but remarked that she did not want to say "no" to her client. Together, we brainstormed options and discussed the importance of being open and honest—even if it meant disappointment. We even developed strategies for how she might say "no." Ultimately, the student had a follow-up conversation with her client and explained her concerns. The client was more than receptive to the student's concerns and

proposed a creative alternative: the student could do the work after the semester was over and be paid for it. Through this situation, the student developed an understanding of how to communicate tactfully and respectfully yet assert herself and her opinion. With women, in particular, the ability to say no is a skill that brings empowerment and self-confidence (see Herrick; Wolfe and Powell), and since most of these businesses were owned by women, the clients served an important function in engendering social literacy sponsorship.

Developing social literacy was especially important because of the social status differences between the university students and the clients. The students were all White and mostly came from upper- and middle-class households, whereas the majority of the clients were older adults without college degrees who came from a diverse range of backgrounds, races, and cultures. Students expressed surprise when they discovered that some of the clients did not have (or know how to use) smartphones, did not have home Internet access, or were hesitant to spend money on a website, even though it would benefit their business. Through their interactions with their clients, however, students came to understand that various factors influence these business decisions. Examining these elements rather than making hasty decisions or purchases is a prudent action for business owners. The clients, too, had some pre-conceptions about the university students that were challenged through the social interactions they had. By interfacing, and by interacting with each other, students and clients were able to reciprocate the sponsorship of social literacies, ultimately becoming more adept and empathetic collaborators, communicators, and writers.

Not only did clients sponsor students' social literacy, but at times students sponsored the social literacy of their clients. In one instance, the client for Coffee Cabaret, a local café and coffee shop, did not particularly want a blog, which was required as part of the assignment. The student working here, Samantha, tried to persuade them to let her do a blog since this was part of the assignment requirements. She explained why a blog could be good for their business and presented to them many of the ideas she had already generated for blog content. The client recognized the predicament Samantha was in and told her that she could create the blog but to place it on Samantha's personal website and delete it after the semester was over rather than on the coffee shop's website. Samantha was glad to oblige the compromise. She created the blog, posting information for customers, pictures and news about upcoming catering events, and interesting stories. She even profiled some of the employees and regular customers, which generated a great deal of interest. When a blog post was ready, she even posted a link to the coffee shop's Facebook and Twitter pages. About halfway through the project, the client was so excited about customer responses to the blog that they asked Samantha to transfer all the blog content to the business's website. Samantha then created a new webpage on the Coffee Cabaret website and transferred the blog material there. This example shows that Samantha was aware of the multiple social situations that, at times, held conflicting expectations for her. Samantha recognized, when talking with the client initially, that even though they did not want a blog, she was required to do one for the course. She could have responded to the client by not creating the blog (and thus not fulfilling the assignment criteria) or creating the blog without their knowledge (which raises ethical concerns). Instead, realizing these tensions, Samantha discussed the issues openly with me and the client and created an alternative with which all parties were ultimately pleased. Moreover, this situation led to Samantha sponsoring the social literacy of her client, albeit indirectly. The client came to value the blog and was able to negotiate the various ways it could be used on their website. This social acuity ultimately indicates how students and clients can appropriate agency within the frameworks they are given and reciprocate their literacy sponsorship.

Through both positive and negative experiences, the clients modeled and enabled literacy sponsorship. Students learned how to work better with others, which developed confidence in their social literacies. The clients both directly and indirectly worked to enable students to better express themselves in social situations, and the students participated in sponsorship as well. Merely by working through issues with another person, students and clients became more attentive to the issues involved in collaboration, conflict, project management, and writing for public audiences. The perceptions developed through this process empowered students to make decisions, collaborate with confidence, and be receptive to receiving social literacy sponsorship from the clients. Ultimately, this ability to negotiate demands, work well with others, and address conflict will better prepare students to meet the demands of the workplace.

Ethical Literacy

Reciprocal literacy sponsorship evidenced itself in ethical literacy as well, but the sponsorship was more indirect

and unforeseen than in other literacies. Ethical literacy involves knowing when a particular action is right or wrong and understanding that there are consequences to the choices we make (Anderson; Coley; Cook; Fontaine and Hunter). Ethical literacy considers all stakeholders (Cook) and enables people "to make informed choices about whether, how, and where to use their knowledge" (Coley 20).

In this assignment, students had a responsibility to their clients, to the clients' audiences, and to me. Each had to first understand their client—the business itself, the clients served, the goals of the business, and so on. Students researched and collected data on the organization so that they could make better decisions about the content, form, style, and design of the PDIs they would develop. This in turn helped them make responsible ethical decisions that would impact their clients' identity and branding. Through interactions with their clients, they had to negotiate questions of ethical responsibility.

To give an example of ethical literacy sponsorship, students Selena and Chloe originally chose to partner with a local bakery in town. The client wanted to post images of the business's cakes and cookies to their website and Facebook page because she felt it would benefit the business, enticing customers to stop by the bakery or place online orders. The owner's son gave this team pictures to use—and represented them off as the originals. After glancing through the pictures, the students became skeptical that these photos originated with the business: some photos looked like stock photos, printed off the Internet, and others contained printed URLs on the back or bottom of the images. The students even searched online and found the exact same pictures the man had passed off as his "mom's photos" copyrighted to other businesses. The student team contacted me first because they did not know what to make of it. We discussed several possible courses of action, including asking for original photos from the business, acquiring more details about the pictures they did receive—to put this information on the website for customers—or asking for image citations to place on the website. The students contacted the man, and he became infuriated, refusing to explain himself or give them alternative photos. The man could have made an honest mistake with the pictures; however, because he did not explain himself, the students were convinced he was being deceitful. As a result, they took ethical steps to make sure that they would not violate copyright, privacy, or their own sense of right and wrong. They ultimately decided to abandon this client and find another one to partner with. Although it took them over two weeks to get caught up once they found another partner, they felt good about their decision. Indirectly (and unintentionally), this client enabled ethical literacy sponsorship in the students. He taught them valuable lessons about workplace ethics, codes of content, and fair use. While far from ideal, this situation served as a case study, inviting conversations about intellectual property issues, plagiarism, copyright, and legal and ethical responsibilities in contextualized ways. It also reminded us to take even greater care in establishing our own and others' PDIs. Students thus became more cognizant of the ethical implications and long-term effects of ethical and unethical decision-making. Although the literacy sponsorship was indirect, the collaboration with a client facilitated ethical literacy development.

Clients also sponsored students' ethical literacies more directly. Students had to consider the ethical implications of their decisions about technology use. A wide range of software programs were available for students on university computers (InDesign, Photoshop, Dreamweaver, iMovie, Word), but the clients often had little or no access to these tools. Students, therefore, had to come up with creative ways to choose the sites they were going to use. Students discussed with their clients which programs they owned and which ones they might be willing to purchase so that the transfer of the sites at the end of the project would occur with greater ease. The clients were straightforward with the students about the important criteria in technology use and purchase, such as cost, ease of use, learning curve, and features. Through these conversations, clients reinforced to students how business decisions are bound to issues of access, economics, and sociopolitical conditions. Chuck, for instance, wrote,

> When I first read the assignment and realized that we had to find a business with no online presence, I thought there was no way we would find such a place. I mean, everyone is online these days. However, after working with my client and her business, I came to realize that she doesn't have the time, resources, or know-how to do any of the things I take for granted. These are the reasons she isn't online. It's not that she doesn't want to be online.

The clients were able to discuss with the students why they were not already online, and they seemed motivated to share this information with students to foster understanding. Students like Chuck learned that some small businesses do not have the finances to outsource their web design and social media needs, yet these same

organizations also do not have access to resources that would help them learn these valuable skills themselves. So students worked with their clients to bypass some of these technological constraints, including introducing low-cost options, such as open-source software, free trial downloads, and Creative Commons. Conversations with clients increased students' awareness of these issues and instilled important ethical literacies. This sponsorship also taught students how to recognize the consequences of their actions. The clients had a major stake in sharing constraints regarding decisions about technology, and students benefited from their sponsorship.

As students developed ethical literacy in themselves, they also served as literacy sponsors to their clients' ethical literacy development. In one instance, the client at a hair salon posted images of her clients to Facebook on the day the page went live. When student Joy noticed pictures were posted to the page, she called her client and asked if she had gotten permission from the customers to post their pictures online. The client responded that she had not asked for permission but wasn't concerned because she sees these kinds of pictures online all the time. The student continued to be concerned: she didn't want the hair salon customers to be surprised or upset when they saw their images online. So, Joy proposed a solution. She would create a brief form that the business could use to get permission. The client ultimately removed the photos and soon uploaded photos for which they had permission. This ethical action fostered goodwill and helped the business establish a positive ethos. Because students shared their knowledge with the clients, clients also came to recognize their ethical responsibilities. They now consider a wider range of stakeholders as they continue to make decisions within and outside of the business.

Ethical literacy ultimately showed both students and clients that writing has real-life consequences. Although ethical literacy sponsorship was somewhat more indirect and tacit than other forms of sponsorship, it proved more reciprocal than technological or rhetorical literacy, allowing both clients and students to share their knowledge and convey important truths to each other. This mutual sponsorship of ethical literacy led both students and clients to be able to more effectively consider ethical considerations every time they write, act, interact with others, and make decisions.

Critical Literacy

By working with clients who occupied mostly different social positions, students sponsored and were sponsored in critical literacies. Cook defines critical literacy as "the ability to recognize and consider ideological stances and power structures and the willingness to take action to assist those in need" (16). Critical literacy involves a "transformation of the critical consciousness" and is "emancipatory" (Thralls and Blyler 256). Stuart Selber writes that a critical literacy "first recognizes and then challenges the values of the status quo. Instead of reproducing the existing social and political order [a critical approach] strives to both expose biases and provide an assemblage of cultural practices that, in a democratic spirit, might lead to the production of positive social change" (171-72). Ira Shor claims that critical literacy "connects the political and the personal, the public and the private, the global and the local, the economic and the pedagogical, for rethinking our lives and for promoting justice in place of inequity" ("What" 1).

In this project, students developed critical literacies that empowered them to fruitfully and productively confront differences in power, gender, class, and age; to recognize and consider ideological and power structures; and to take appropriate action to assist others. First, students became more aware of how gender, age, and other social factors impact success, prestige, and position. Almost all of the business owners with whom the students worked were female, which challenged some essentializing gender stereotypes (see Brady; Ritchie). These women not only worked outside of the home but did so in arguably powerful positions. The stories students heard from their clients emphasized the variety of paths women can take to own a business and disrupted dominant myths about gender, entrepreneurship, agency, and divisions of labor. One student Ashlie remarked at length about her developing aptitude for critical literacy. She writes,

> I have always had an interest in social justice. Even at the age of ten, I was not afraid to call out relatives on their racist views. I even stood up for friends who were bullied. Even still, this project opened my eyes even more to the many problems that plague the world we live in, including sexism. I observed my client on multiple occasions facing difficulties in terms of growing her business because of her gender. For instance, one time I accompanied her to a large marketing

> event, and two other attendees (both men) moved her table to the far corner of the room so that fewer customers visited her booth. She wasn't happy about this, but she never said anything to them, only to me. I was surprised that she let them do that, but she told me that she didn't want to make a scene.
>
> [later]
>
> I began to recognize moments I had faced discrimination as a female. Nothing was really blatant, so I hadn't been aware of it before. But looking back, I can see little moments where boys interrupted me in class, ignored my contributions, or dominated a class project. Now, after working with my client, I will be even more conscious of these subtle moments and work to eliminate all types of prejudices as best I can.

Ashlie observed her client being discriminated against in the workplace. Although her client did not take action in the moment, she talked with Ashlie about the injustice of the situation and modeled alternative ways she could have responded. This experience led Ashlie to reflect on moments in her own life where she had been discriminated against but that she had not really considered before. By learning about her client's life, she comes to understand with more clarity an ugly part of the world and feels, empathizes, and identifies with another, thus developing critical literacy. The client's experience enabled the learning that occurred in Ashlie. In indiscriminate moments with clients, students like Ashlie learned important lessons that fostered their critical literacy.

Clients also imparted to students the various social and power structures at work that both support and limit one's individual agency. As part of the project, students were asked to interview their clients to learn more about the history and background of the business. In most cases, these businesses were started out of necessity—the recession had just hit and many of the small business owners were either laid off or needed a way to supplement their or their partner's income. Through interviews and class conversations when the clients were present, the students were able to acknowledge, learn, and participate in discussions about important issues facing the clients because of their gender, age, class, and/or position as small business owners. Students came to understand that businesses—small or otherwise—may not and perhaps even do not operate as a place of privilege, thus disrupting dominant myths and expanding their critical literacy. Instead, there are a complex and varied external factors that influence business ownership and success. This growing critical awareness occurred as students, together with clients, engaged in critical reflection—an important component of developing critical literacy (see Cushman, "Critical"; Shor, *Empowering,* "What")—and were forced to confront their assumptions. The fact that the clients did not suppress or withhold the critical literacy sponsorship in these instances allowed students to develop greater critical literacy.

In sum, through working with people different from themselves in a service-learning setting, students moved between "sponsor" and "sponsored." They became more aware of their own subject positions and even recognized the places where they occupied privileged positions. Through reflection, they developed greater social, political, and critical awareness. They learned how to deploy and evaluate their writing and rhetorical strategies, becoming more conscious of the ways in which they used language. They also became more focused on the ways their audience might read or interpret writing based on social status or background and seek feedback on material before they post. Now, students and business owners can use their literacy practices to challenge the status quo and "discover alternative paths for self and social development" (Shor, "What" 1). Although critical literacy was not developed equally for all students or clients, they developed a critical consciousness that allowed them "to make broad connections between individual experience and social issues, between single problems and the larger social system" (Shor, *Empowering* 127). Becoming more aware of the subjective positions they occupy can enhance their ability to participate and act in the social and political discourses at work in the world. This sponsorship happened because of the various roles occupied by clients and students and the ways in which they seized these opportunities to sponsor each other.

Reciprocal Literacy Sponsorship

The examples of literacy sponsorship presented here illustrate the dynamic way in which literacy sponsorship can be deployed and reciprocated in service-learning settings. The course itself underwrote occasions for literacy learning and "set the terms for individuals' encounters with literacy" (Brandt, "Sponsors" 169). The

assignment afforded students an opportunity to practice a variety of literacies, to work with others, and to enable/support/teach/model and receive literacy sponsorship. Students took advantage of this unique opportunity afforded them and developed multiliteracies, sponsored the literacies of others, and opened themselves to sponsorship by the clients they came to know.

While this sponsorship occurred within a course setting mandating students to work with others and to "hand off" the technologies to clients before the semester was over, the students were still open to sponsoring and being sponsored by their clients. This course setting does not discount the reciprocal literacy sponsorship that occurred when students worked individually with clients. Rather, it enhances and expands it, demonstrating that students can work within the boundaries they are given to sponsor others and be sponsored by someone other than the teacher. In this study, students gained a range of literacies that empowered them to establish and maintain a PDI for themselves and their client. The development of these multiliteracies brought assurance to the students and will be valuable as they enter the workforce, attend graduate school, engage in acts of citizenship, volunteer, and join local communities. Yet, this literate development went further than just being beneficial to the individual; it also turned social and reciprocal when students sponsored the literacies of their clients and when clients sponsored literacies of students. Students and clients used their literacies, skills, and aptitudes to make positive changes in the world by sponsoring the literacy of others. While every service-learning course or every act of teaching and learning does not necessarily include sponsorship, by passing on literacies and offering the invitation to literacy, individuals can become instrumental agents of social change and alter the literacies and, therefore the lives, of others. Through reciprocal literacy sponsorship, individual literacy learning can be compounded and applied with greater confidence, critical awareness, and skill, even extending the sponsorship beyond the initial relationship.

In addition to the movement between "sponsor" and "sponsored," both clients and students gained advantage from the sponsorship by enabling, supporting, teaching, and modeling literacy. On a practical level, clients gained a website and social media presence for their business and developed valuable relationships with our university and its students. Students developed important literacies and skills that they can use in their professional and personal lives; they also received workplace experience and learned valuable life lessons by working with someone from a different social position.

The multiliteracies highlighted here offer instructive examples about the possibilities that exist in examining students as literacy sponsors and in seeing how clients can sponsor literacies in service-learning settings. When students and clients interact in meaningful ways, both are able to reap the benefits of sponsorship. Clients and other service-learning partners hold expertise in areas that students do not. They are often more knowledgeable about the business and the local community, and their broader life experiences enable them to share their knowledge and experiences with students. They also hold power and authority through their age, expertise, and experience and can exercise that authority by seizing hold of the sponsorship opportunity. Likewise, students possess unique capabilities in terms of literacy knowledge and skills, as well as technical expertise, that they can share with clients. Here, students are invited to move effortlessly between sponsor and sponsor and to grow in their multiliteracies as a result. These interactions between clients and students ultimately promote a view of sponsorship that is dynamic, two-way, and fluid.

While students and clients reciprocated literacy sponsorship to each other, they also reciprocated it to me. While I designed the assignment and the course and played a role in sponsoring literacy, students also brought their learned skills and literacies back to the classroom, thus teaching me and further sponsoring and reciprocating literacy. Selber acknowledges that instructors may well lag behind students when it comes to specific technical skills and that student experiences outside the classroom can teach instructors, just like they did me. Not only did I learn and grow in my technical skills with social media, web design, and software programs, but I also was able to rethink certain aspects of the assignment and curriculum and to interrogate some of my own assumptions. Through student feedback and personal reflection during and after the project, students empowered me to become more reflective on my own teaching. I was able to confront my own biases about working with for-profit businesses in a service-learning context and to acknowledge more critically my own privileges as a college writing professor. I learned to listen better so that I could adequately balance the needs and goals of our classroom with those of the students and clients. I became an advocate for students and clients, and I learned to balance the individual needs of each person involved, often altering my curricular goals as the project evolved. Although I entered this project with certain goals in mind, the dialogue between me, students, and they allowed me to mentor and guide students while also developing skills in listening, adapting, and learning, all while sponsored in the process. This sponsor-sponsored relationship between student and instructor

deserves greater future attention.

Ultimately, through this project, students developed multiliteracies, sponsored multiliteracies, and accepted literacy sponsorship from their clients. Through the lens of literacy sponsorship, students came to realize that they are shareholders in the outcome of our communities, have a real stake in the change that occurs, and can be involved in social change and transformation. Although the course was only one semester, students are now more prepared to face the literacy demands of the future and to pass on their experiences to others, thus becoming advocates and activists for social change and more open to opportunities for sponsoring and being sponsored on a local level. Through small-scale literacy encounters like this one, students and clients can sponsor literacy and feel empowered to continue in their literacy sponsorship. Educating students to work with others—to share their knowledge and to listen to those with whom they are working—will help lead to this learning and transformation. As John Scenters-Zapico claims, “It is clear that sponsorship is a complex, rhetorical process essential to literacy learning” (234). As we continue to design assignments, we need to consider the ways that we can move students from “sponsored” to “sponsor.” When sponsorship is fluid and one functions as both sponsor and sponsored, the interests of both can converge in ways that may not have been envisioned. By presenting our students with opportunities for literacy sponsorship, students can develop literacies that are reinforced and fortified through the intentional and strategic literacy involvement with others. In the end, when we take our expertise into our communities, we become instrumental, intentional agents of social change, serving both academic and civic interests. Students as literacy sponsors is a powerful way to begin this process.

Although reciprocal literacy sponsorship aided students in their development and sponsorship of multiliteracies, it is important to note that some complications remain in identifying students as literacy sponsors. For one, in the context of the classroom, students often lack the agency, authority, or opportunity to sponsor others. In this study, for instance, students were responding to an assignment created by an instructor, and this assignment largely set the terms for the literacy sponsorship to occur. Although students were able to work within this frame and still sponsor literacy, they were largely acting in response to the assignment criteria. Future studies might then examine how students can become sponsors in other contexts: in the workplace, in their home, with friends, in class. They might also try to name the types of sponsorship that occur in various contexts or how literacy sponsorship can reside inside other systems of sponsorship (e.g., a service-learning course) and how these systems might diverge or converge.

Another complication of considering students as literacy sponsors emerges when we ask what students gain from sponsorship. Brandt’s definition of literacy sponsorship entails that sponsors gain advantage from sponsorship (“Sponsor” 166). For students in this study, beyond fortifying certain literacies, what they gained (or lost) through the sponsorship was not always clear. At times, the gain was tacit and indirect; other times it was unclear. Future studies might examine the aims, motivations, and goals students have for sponsoring others and what they stand to gain as a result. This research would be valuable in fleshing out how individual motivations might create or limit opportunities for sponsorship.

Finally, the literacy sponsorship students experience can take many different forms (e.g., direct, indirect, motivator, self-sponsor), yet our research has not accounted for this range of individual types of sponsorship. Future research should continue to examine the numerous ways and contexts that students might be or become literacy sponsors and what reciprocal literacy sponsorship might look like in other contexts. Research might address the various kinds of sponsorship in which students participate, the people they sponsor and how they come to sponsor, and in what contexts literacy sponsorship has the potential to be reciprocal. Although we are just beginning to consider these questions, reciprocal literacy sponsorship presents new opportunities for our classrooms, students, and communities.

Endnotes

[1]This assignment was given in spring 2012, before mobile technologies became as popular as they are now. Although significant changes have occurred in social media since then, the findings presented here on literacy sponsorship are still relevant and significant.

[2]One limitation of this study is that I did not conduct interviews with the clients. This is largely because although I

knew that students would have to hand off the sites to their clients and teach them rhetorical and online marketing techniques, only when I began to analyze the data did the notion of reciprocal literacy sponsorship emerge. Unfortunately, at this point I no longer had access to the clients. Future research could make literacy sponsorship a specific aim or component of the project or investigate literacy sponsorship from the perspectives of outside clients.

Appendix

Professional Digital Marketing Assignment Part II: Marketing a Small Business

Overview of Assignment

This assignment asks you to identify a small business in our community and market it online to the public through a Website, a blog, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Objectives

- To enhance and expand your critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.
- To expand your own and your client's digital, rhetorical, and social literacies.
- To apply what you know about writing, rhetorical analysis, social media, and design to a real-world context and learn how to assess and fulfill someone else's rhetorical needs, audiences, and purposes.
- To help you recognize and make conscious choices as you work on the planning, design, and production of your work.
- To increase your social, political, cultural, and civic awareness about our community and instill in you activist approaches to community and civic engagement.

Project Stages

Task 1: Choose a Small Business and Write an Inquiry Letter

Select a local small business (with fewer than 10 employees) that interests you and with whom you would like to work. Look to see what kind of online presence it has. If it already has a website, you probably want to move on to another company (There are plenty that have no presence at all). You may, in fact, want to begin in the Yellow Pages or drive around town looking for places off-the-beaten path. Then, make a list of three potential businesses and write the first one an "inquiry letter" in the form of an email. Introduce yourself, explain what you are doing, inquire if they are interested in working with you for this project, and ask to set up a face-to-face meeting in which you will give them more details of the project (make sure you CC me on all emails to your client). If you haven't heard back from your first choice within 48 hours of initial contact, move on to your second choice. Repeat these steps until you have found a small business willing to work with you.

Task 2: Compose a Formal Business Letter to Client

Write a formal business letter to the client in which you give the client background information on the project and explain what you will be doing this semester. This letter is intended to be lengthier than the inquiry letter, allowing your client to understand what you will be doing and what role the client will have in the process.

Task 3: Research the Business, Interview the Client, and Analyze the Rhetorical Situation

When you market an organization to the public, you must understand the business itself and the rhetorical situation in which you are writing. You will need to learn as much about the business as you can. Research it on the Web. Collect print materials and other documents. Interview the client and other staff. Collect the following information about the business:

- Mission, history, and values.
- Goals.
- Services.
- Clients/customers/audiences (i.e., who is served and what are their demographics).
- Staff (i.e., who, how many, background, demographics, expertise).
- Communication preferences, types, and styles.
- Challenges and needs of the business.
- Technology programs (hardware, software) and level of general technological expertise.
- Graphics: logos, images (print and digital), tables/figures, etc.
- Background, history, and previous careers of the client or owner.

- Decide when you will volunteer or spend time at the site. Please note that you must spend at least five hours at the site.

Task 4: Present Your Client to the Class
After you conduct your research and analysis, you will then present your findings to the class in two ways: (1) a written analysis of the client and (2) a professional oral presentation.

Written Analysis
Compose a professional memo that includes the research from Task 3 as well as the following information.

- ***Business Analysis:*** Who is your business (background/history, mission, values, goals, demographics, workplace culture, employees, organization set up, etc.)? What special characteristics does it have? What is its greatest strengths? Weaknesses? Etc.
- ***Marketing Strategy/ies:*** How will you market your client to their audience? What are your goals? What areas will you focus on in your marketing of it? How will you increase their business? What are your goals? What do you hope to accomplish? Etc.
- ***Client Use of and Involvement with Web Tools:*** How will your client use Twitter? Facebook? The website you create? How will you pass these web spaces over to your client?
- ***Tentative Website Design:*** Compose a tentative draft of your website by listing all of your site's pages (1st level, 2nd level, 3rd level, etc.). List main pages and subpages and decide how they will all work together. Draw lines to connect pages and sections that will link to one another. Consider the following: Who is your audience? What is your purpose? What kind of content will be on the site? What do you want the site to do? What information will be on the home page? What will be the main/second/third-level pages of your site? How will the user navigate the site? And so on.

Oral Profile Presentation
Prepare a 10-minute oral presentation based on your written analysis in which you profile your business. Give detailed information about the business and your client (background, purposes/goals/vision, the clients/audience they serve, etc.) so that your audience can be more knowledgeable. After your presentation, you will have a few minutes for questions and conversation. We will invite members from each business to these presentations, and they will be invited to speak and participate.

Task 5: Create and Maintain a Facebook Page and Twitter Account for this Business
Consult with your client about what information should go on the pages and what kinds of posts they would like you to make. Plan, research, and gather content. Then, as soon as possible, begin posting to the social media sites. Ask your client to send you updates; post your own updates (ask permission first). Remember that the posts can be about anything—even current events, new items, or links to articles—anything in which your client's fans or followers might be interested.

Task 6: Create a Website (that Includes a Blog) for this Business
The website should include:

1. A minimum of 5 discrete pages (the content, purpose, and users' needs should dictate exactly how many).
2. A blog, complete with icon options (RSS, Facebook, Twitter, and other sites).
3. Additional pages/documents/information, as needed: brochure, flyer, newsletter, press kit, hours of operation, downloadable coupons, logo, images, fact sheets, resources page, video, and internal and external links relevant to your purpose and audience.

Task 7: Transfer the Website, Blog, and Social Media Accounts over to the Client
As you near completion of the project, consider how you want to transfer these materials over to your client. Consider what they need to know to be able to maintain this online presence after you leave. Plan for how you are going to teach them to use these technologies.

Task 8: Present Project Final Oral Presentation about Project
At the end of the semester, you will give a 15-minute oral presentation about this project. Highlight the process you went through to create an online presence for this business, including the work you performed, the sites/spaces you created, and challenges and successes you experienced. Tell us what you learned. Your clients will be invited to join us and to give a response to your presentation and the project.

Task 9: Compose a Written Reflection over the Project (Individual Assignment)
Submit a 3-5 page single-spaced reflection over this project—what you did, what you learned, how you changed, how you grew, how you developed. Think of this piece as a companion piece to the final products you created for your client. Some questions you might consider include:

- What are the most important things you learned through this project (about writing, research, social media, design, digital marketing, blogging, editing, your interests, service-learning, professional digital identities, social issues, our community, etc.)?
- What literacies did you develop and how (i.e., rhetorical, functional, critical, ethical, digital/technological, social)?
- How will you use what you have learned this semester? In other words, what will you do with the knowledge and experience you have gained?
- What skills have you gained or improved upon? How will these new skills help you?
- What was it like to work with a client? What successes did you have? What challenges did you face? What did you learn?

What did you learn about our community? How has this experience reshaped you or your thinking?

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